

Research Paper 1

FINDINGS FROM COMPARISON OF ALL AVAILABLE VASHON-MAURY ISLAND CENSUS DATA ON INDIVIDUALS FROM 1880 TO 1940

ABSTRACT

This paper compares summary Census data for Vashon-Maury Island for all of the Federal and all of the Washington Territorial Censuses from 1880 through 1940. Patterns, findings and analysis of this information are highlighted, as they are revealed through Census information. Topics covered include population numbers, household size, gender, race, marital status, birthplace, home ownership, education, age, relationship, employment industry, and income. Each research finding is followed by commentary offering an historical context.

NOTES CONCERNING THIS COMPARISON

Most of the comparisons in this paper are based on Vashon-Maury Island Federal Census data, available every ten years from 1880-1940. Information is also available from four Vashon-Maury Island Washington Territorial Censuses from 1885, 1887, 1889, and 1892 (the first three taken before Washington was a State). As no Federal Census data are available for 1890, an average of these four Territorial Censuses was used to represent approximately the same time period for comparative purposes.

Two tables have been prepared to accompany this analysis:

- Table One: Comparative Summary of Federal Census Data for Vashon-Maury Island and Average Washington Territorial Census Data.
- Table Two: Comparative Summary of Washington Territorial Census Data for Vashon-Maury Island (1885, 1887, 1889, 1892).

FINDINGS

Research Finding: The number of individuals on Vashon-Maury Island (VMI) gradually increased from 1880 through 1940 from a low of 100 people recorded in the 1880 Census to 3,118 people noted in 1940. The 1880 Federal Census, showing only 100 individuals, may have been an undercount as the 1885 Washington Territorial Census, taken only five years later, noted 347 people on VMI.

If the four Territorial Censuses are examined individually, they show a higher number of people on VMI in 1885 (347) than in 1887 (253), and a significant increase by 1892 (930).

Historical Background:

VMI was part of the emerging Puget Sound Region that was beginning to be settled following the Puget Sound Indian War of 1855-56. The first permanent settler arrived

on Vashon in 1865. With the arrival of the railroad linking Tacoma and the Columbia River in 1874, and the arrival of the transcontinental railroad at Portland in 1883 and then at Tacoma in 1887, population on the Island began to increase rapidly. As the cities of Seattle and Tacoma grew quickly, VMI, as an agricultural and natural resource hinterland, grew as well.

There were, however, significant interruptions in the population growth of the Island. The 1893 depression significantly slowed population increase during that decade, the agricultural depression of the 1920s saw the number of people on the Island decline, and the Great Depression of the 1930s caused a significant slowing in population growth with an increase by 1940 of only 11% above the 1920 level.

Just as there were disruptions in the growth of the Island's populations, there was also a period of significant rapid growth. From 1900 to 1910, the Island's population grew by 156% from 944 residents in 1900 to 2,423 in 1910. The growth from 100 residents in 1880 to 3,118 residents in 1940 was not a smooth and steady increase.

Research Finding: The number of households on VMI gradually increased from 1880 (26 households) through 1940 (1,078). (No household information is available for the Territorial Censuses.)

Historical Background:

This is consistent with the growth in population.

Research Finding: Average household size increased from 1880 to 1900, from 3.3 to 4.3 persons/household and then decreased from 1900 to 1940, from 4.3 to 2.9 persons/household. With that conclusion, it should also be noted that the designation of those in a household changed from Census to Census. For example, in some years anyone in the enumerated structure was considered part of the household; e.g., boarders, laborers and other non-related individuals. If there was more than one immediate family living under the same roof, all of these individuals could be considered part of the same household. In other years, a more limited definition for household members seems to have been used. By the 1940 Census, there appear to be some instances of more than one defined household living in a single residence. These differences make comparison of household size through the years very difficult.

Historical Background:

As with any emerging frontier, the way households were defined in these Vashon censuses, is at best problematic. The traditionally large farming families, the presence of significant numbers of single young men, the practice of multigenerational housing, and the limited availability of housing all contribute to the difficulty of analyzing average household size in any significant way. The 1880 average household size is small because of the low number of young people under 21 years of age. As the under 21 population grew in 1900 and then declined after 1900 the average household size grew and then declined consistently.

Research Finding: The percentage of the population under 21 years of age grew from 38% in 1880 to 45% in 1900, and then declined steadily to 31% by 1940.

Historical Background: The number of households, the average size of households, and the percentage of the population under 21 years of age are closely interrelated. In 1880, as with any emerging frontier, the number of families with young children was small making the average household size correspondingly small. As the frontier became more settled and as the railroad arrived making emigration easier, the size of families, the number of young people, and correspondingly, the average size of households all increased. This pattern is what was seen on VMI between 1880 and 1900. In 1900 there were 422 households, the average household size was 4.3 persons, and the percentage of young people under 21 years was 44%. By 1940 there were 951 households, an average household size of 2.89 persons, and 31% of the population was under 21 years of age. This VMI pattern reflects this expected connection between average household size and population under 21 years of age.

Research Finding: As the population increased through the years, so did the number of Census precincts. The 1880 Census and all of the Washington Territorial Censuses considered all of the Island to be one Census precinct. In 1900, there were four Census precincts: Burton, Chautauqua, Maury and Vashon. The 1910 Census had six precincts, adding Cove and Quartermaster and dividing the Vashon Precinct into two parts. After 1910 Chautauqua was dropped and that Precinct never appeared again. The 1920-1940 Censuses divided the Island into nine precincts, adding Dockton, Dolphin, Island, and Lisabuela, while grouping the two Vashon Precincts into a single precinct.

The Vashon Precinct has always contained the largest number of individuals (lowest proportion - 18.7% in 1920, highest proportion - 33.6% in 1910). The exception is 1900 when the Burton precinct had more individuals (37.1% for Burton; 31.1% for Vashon).

Each Census may have used different geographic borders for Census precincts even if those precincts retained the same name through the years. Still, considering possible changes in geographic configuration for each precinct, it can be seen that the population was oriented toward the south end of the Island in 1900 and 1920 and then began to spread to the north end of the Island starting in 1930.

Historical Background:

The first settlement of the Island followed the pattern set by the Sqababsh/S'Homamish Native People who settled on Quartermaster Harbor and were focused toward the Puyallup River. As Euro-Americans came to the Island, they first settled in Quartermaster Harbor and were focused toward the City of Tacoma located on Commencement Bay at the mouth of the Puyallup River, which was also the terminus of the first railroad into Washington Territory. Thus, of the first four Census precincts to divide the Island in 1900, three precincts were on the southern part of the Island and only one, the Vashon Precinct, covered the north part of the Island. As Seattle emerged

as the dominant city in the Puget Sound Region, as automobiles made transportation on the Island easier, and as automobile ferries arrived; the north end of the Island began to develop more rapidly than the south end. This is reflected in the increasing number of residents in the Vashon Precinct following the 1900 Census.

Research Finding: Prior to 1900, almost two-thirds of those living on VMI were males. Beginning in 1900 only slightly over half of those living on the Island were males.

Historical Background:

This finding is consistent with the nature of an emerging natural resource frontier, which is dependent on large numbers of young single males working in the natural resource extractive industries, which fueled the growth of the region. As VMI experienced the shift from logging and mining (brick making) as primary activities, to fishing and farming, there was a consistent need for male labor. As the Island's economy matured and as technological changed in these extractive resource economies, the need for large number of single males declined and the gender balance on the Island began to equalize.

Research Finding: The non-white population of VMI was highest in the first formal record of presence in 1880 when it was 27%, almost all of whom were Native Americans. After that time, the non-white population was never great. The lowest number (.8%) was reported in 1900; the greatest number (7.7%) was noted in 1930.

Historical Background:

Native Americans, have always been a part of the Vashon-Maury population, but their lack of citizenship until 1924 and their removal to the Puyallup Reservation, led to few being counted in the Census and few living full-time on the Island.

African-Americans have either been absent or very few in number on VMI. The few who did appear during this period came with the Dust Bowl migrations of the late 1920s and 1930s.

The pattern of Asian immigration to Vashon reflects that of the nation as a whole and the West Coast in particular. The first Asian immigrants were Chinese, but with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1885 and the forcible removal of Chinese in many West Coast cities, including Seattle and Tacoma, the number of Chinese dropped significantly. This is seen on VMI, where the few Chinese in the Censuses are largely employed in logging or brick making camps as cooks or domestics. By 1900 their numbers drop significantly until, during the 1920s, Chinese come to the Island as agricultural laborers. The increase to 29 Chinese in 1930 and 16 Chinese in 1940 census reflects this change.

Japanese immigration followed the gap left by the closing of Chinese immigration and by the 1890s numbers of Japanese immigrants begin to appear. This immigration was limited by the 1903 Gentleman's Agreement, by state anti-Japanese land-laws, and by the Immigration Quota Act of 1920 and the Immigration Reform Act of 1921, the latter

two measures effectively closing immigration from Asia. The increased Japanese population after 1900 on VMI reflected the increase in Japanese immigration after 1890. Despite the curtailment of Japanese immigration nationally, VMI continued to see increases in its Japanese population into the 1930s as Japanese moved into rural areas to farm. Working in agriculture was an occupation with easy access to leased land, required no boss, and was well suited to a Japanese ethic of hard work

With Japanese and Chinese immigration closed, there was an opportunity for immigration by Filipinos who, as residents of an American Protectorate, carried United States passports. The Filipino population of the Island increased significantly during the 1920s and 1930s. There were 38 Filipinos present in 1930 and 28 in 1940. Filipino immigration was curtailed in 1934 through the Tydings-McDuffie Act which gave the Filipinos independence, but meant their citizens were no longer considered American nationals with United States passports. The Act set an annual quota of 50 Filipino immigrants, effectively closing the door to Filipino immigration to the United States. Filipinos already in the United States and others who arrived prior to the passport change began to move into rural areas like VMI where land and jobs were available.

Research Finding: The Japanese population first appeared on VMI in 1900 (7 people). It then increased dramatically to 94 people (3.9% of the population) in 1910. The largest number of individuals identified as Japanese was reported in 1930 (140 individuals, 5.0% of the population). Two years prior to internment, there were 123 individuals identifying themselves as Japanese on the Island (3.9% of the population).

There may have been people who thought of themselves as Japanese living on the Island during the time of the Territorial Censuses, however "Japanese" was not a coding category available on the Territorial Census Enumeration form.

Historical Background:

There were two stages of Japanese immigration into the United States. The first stage, from 1870-1907, often termed the Pioneer Stage, consisted mostly of *dekasegi* immigrants, who were "primarily sojourners" and typically single men. The second stage, from 1908-1924, often termed the Settlement Stage, was characterized by the "arrival of women" and families.

The Japanese immigrants to America demonstrated great ingenuity in adapting to a new culture. They were drawn to strawberries and other forms of garden farming because it was labor intensive. Euro-Americans cultivated other crops, which made berry farming less competitive for the Japanese growers. Garden farming and strawberry farming needed less capital investment to begin production, which suited cash tight Japanese immigrants well, and the high yield for small parcels of land was attractive since Japanese residents could not own land and were forced to sublease property, or put their farms in the names of their American born children. "Because of their tentative situation, Japanese farmers chose crops that matured and produced much quicker." (Sunstrom, 1996) These Japanese immigrants attempted to fit in. They

found a way to balance their Japanese heritage and their newly adopted American home. They became successful and well accepted members of the VMI community.

Research Finding: As noted above, the Chinese population first appeared in any Census in 1880 (3 individuals) and then again in the 1885 and 1889 Territorial Censuses (4 and 3 individuals, respectively). However, no one identified as Chinese were indicated as living on VMI in the 1887 or 1892 Territorial Censuses. A single person listed as Chinese was noted in the 1900 Federal Census, but disappeared in the 1910 Census. Although 2 people were listed as Chinese in 1920, a large increase in this population did not occur until 1930 when 29 people were listed as Chinese. This was reduced to 16 people in 1940.

A single person identifying themselves as Filipino first appeared in the 1920 Census. By 1930, Filipinos were the second highest non-white group (38 people, 1.4% of the total population). This decreased to 28 people in 1940.

The last year in this summary analysis, 1940, marked the year with the greatest racial diversity on VMI including 28 individuals identified as Chinese, 28 Filipinos, and 123 Japanese.

Historical Background:

The pattern of Asian immigration to Vashon reflects that of the nation as a whole and the West Coast in particular. The first Asian immigrants were Chinese, but with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1885 and the forcible removal of Chinese in many West Coast cities, including Seattle and Tacoma, the number of Chinese drop significantly. This is seen on Vashon-Maury Island where the few Chinese in the Census are generally employed in logging or brick making camps as cooks or domestics, and then by 1900 largely disappear from the Island. Japanese immigration followed the gap left by the closing of Chinese immigration, and by the 1890s numbers of Japanese immigrants begin to appear. This immigration is limited by the 1903 Gentleman's Agreement, by state anti-Japanese land-laws, and by the Immigration Quota Act of 1920 and the Immigration Reform Act of 1921. All of these effectively close immigration from Asia. The increased Japanese population after 1900 reflects this on Vashon-Maury Island. With Japanese and Chinese immigration closed, there was an opportunity for immigration by Filipinos who, as residents of an American Protectorate, carried United States passports. The Filipino population of the Islands increased significantly during the 1920s and 1930s until Filipino immigration was curtailed in 1934.

All of these factors combine to mark 1940 as the year with the greatest racial diversity on VMI.

Research Finding: In 1880, 58.2% of those living on VMI were single and 37.8% were married. This changed gradually, and by 1940 just the opposite was seen: 41.5% were single and 48.6% married (8.3% were widowed and 1.6% divorced). 1940 was also the first year the number of married individuals exceeded the number of those who were

single. The number identified as widowed rose from 4.1% of the population in 1880 (only 4 individuals) to 8.3% in 1940 (259 individuals).

Historical Background:

This finding is consistent with the change from a natural resource frontier economy, which is dependent on large numbers of young single males working in the natural resource extractive industries, to a more settled farming and commerce economy which increasingly needed fewer single young males. Technological changes began to decrease the labor needed, and migrant pickers began to replace the need for full-time agricultural laborers. As the “wage workers frontier” that had emerged in the Pacific Northwest between the 1880s and 1920s began to disappear, so did the large number of single people in the population.

As VMI experienced this shift, the percentage of single individuals decreased and the number of those who were married increased. The balance of married to single on the Island began to equalize.

Health care was served on the Island with the arrival of the first medical doctor, W.T. Lovering, in 1892. A second physician, Dr. Frederick McMurray, came to the Island to practice in the 1920s. As the automobile allowed residents easier access to Dr. McMurray and automobile ferries made it possible to reach off-Island hospitals quicker, life expectancy increased. Women continued to live longer than men, resulting in more widows by 1940.

Research Finding: At least 70% of people living on VMI were born in the United States, starting with the 1880 Census. This increased to 78% in the Territorial Censuses and in the 1900 Federal Census, but then dropped to 69.6% in 1910. By 1940 the percent of those born in this country reached its highest level of 79.1%.

Slightly over a quarter of VMI residents (28%) were born in Washington, then considered a Territory, according to the 1880 Census. This percentage was high most probably due to the inclusion of 23 Native Americans in that count. The 1885 Washington Territorial Census noted that 12.9% of the population was born in Washington (42 people, but only 11 Native Americans). The percent of those born in Washington State gradually increased through the years reaching 38.9% (1,198 individuals) by 1940.

Historical Background:

These findings are not unexpected. The presence of Sqababsh/S’Homamish on the Island even after their removal and allocation to the Puyallup Reservation in Tacoma, reflects their ties to the place they called home. The flood of European immigration in the 1860s and 1870s was slow to reach the Pacific Northwest. Most new emigrants at that time were from the Midwest or Northeast sections of the United States. After 1900, the transcontinental railroad link opened more immigration from Europe and Asia, and the percentage of American born residents dropped. Once these new immigrants

began producing families born on VMI, the percentage of American/Washington born residents increased.

Research Finding: Beginning in 1940, questions concerning father's birthplace and mother's birthplace were only asked of a small sample of individuals. These questions were also not asked in the Washington Territorial Censuses.

Looking at where the individual's father and mother were born as noted in the information that is available (concluding in 1930), shows a different pattern than what is seen for the individual identified as the primary household respondent in the Censuses. Father's birthplace stayed close to 50% in or outside the United States throughout the years (varying for born inside the U.S. from a low of 45.1% in 1910 to a high of 59.0% in 1880). Census data for Mother's birthplace showed the lowest percentage born in the United States in 1910 (48.4%) and the highest in 1880 (65.0%).

Historical Background:

These findings are consistent with the larger immigration patterns into the United States and onto the West Coast of America. As a "nation of Immigrants," the United States relied on immigration from primarily Europe, and on the West Coast also from Asia. The general pattern for European immigration was that initial immigrants came from northern Europe, and later arrivals from central and southern Europe. This pattern continued until immigration was restricted in 1921. For immigration from Asia, the general pattern was for Chinese, next Japanese, and then Filipinos to come to the United States as immigration for each preceding group was closed. With the advent of immigration restrictions, increasingly fewer parents were born outside the United States.

Research Finding: Whether the residence was owned or rented began to be asked in 1900. At that time over three-fourths (76.4%) of living places were owned. This percentage decreased to two-thirds (66.1%) by 1920. The highest level of home ownership was seen ten years later in 1930 (78.7%) but then fell again in 1940 to 73.1%.

Historical Background:

Home ownership has always been a major goal of Americans in rural areas like VMI. The rapid growth rate between 1900 and 1920, the presence of numerous single young men on the "Wageworker's Frontier", and the rising costs of land and housing during this period helps to explain the drop in home ownership between 1900 and 1920. By the 1920s, VMI experienced the effects of the national agricultural depression of the 1920s and the subsequent loss of population meant that those owning land and homes were more likely to stay while those renting land or rooms were more likely to leave. This pattern increased the percentage of homeownership. As the Great Depression of the 1930s deepened, and as emigrants from the Dust Bowl flooded onto the West Coast, some found their way to VMI. These new residents often came with farming skills, but with little capital, thus the drop in home ownership in 1940 is not unexpected.

The Japanese population on VMI, while small, contributed in part to this shift in home ownership. The limitations on Japanese immigrants owning land, except in the name of their American born children, seems to have contributed to this pattern of home ownership on the Island. With significant Japanese immigration to the Islands during 1910 to 1920, the increase in the number of rented properties is not unexpected. As the children of these Japanese immigrants reached legal age, and could purchase property in their family's name, by 1930, the percentage of rented properties dropped.

Research Finding: Average age showed a considerable increase in the 60 years covered in this analysis. It was 26.1 years in 1880, increasing to an average age of 38 years by 1940.

Historical Background:

This pattern of what is now called the “graying” of VMI is not unexpected. A frontier settler society attracts young people – families and singles – who seek new opportunities and who have the physical capabilities to start a new life on a frontier. As the Island became more settled, as the general population of the United States aged, as families became smaller with fewer children, and as medical care improved; it is not surprising to see the average age increase by nearly 10 years in the 1880 to 1940 decades.

Research Finding: For Federal Census information, one individual is designated as the head of the household (usually the husband where one is present) and all other household members are identified based on their relationship to him. The variety of types of relationships grew considerably from 1880 to 1940. For this first Census, only husbands, wives, sons, daughters and a very few brothers and fathers are noted. By 1930 and 1940 there were slightly over 40 different types of relationships listed including such categories as grandniece and step-granddaughter.

An analysis was made of 1900-1940 Census information looking at the change in household relationships between those related by blood, marriage or adoption and those who were living in the same household but not directly related, such as laborers or maids. The highest percent of those in households not directly related to the head of the household occurred in 1900 (11.1%). The lowest was seen in 1920 (2.2% of households).

The primary type of non-related individual noted as residing in the same household was a boarder or lodger. Other types of non-related individuals were generally employed by the head of the household and identified by such titles as hired men or housekeeper. The term “servant” was used in each Census from 1900 through 1940 with 15 individuals identified by that title in 1900 down to 3 classified as “servant” in 1940. The exact meaning of this term is not clear.

Historical Background:

These findings are consistent with the economic shifts that took place during the first half of the Twentieth century. As the “wage workers frontier” was closing in the early

decades of the Twentieth Century, households with single young men and other laborers were at their height in 1900. As that “wage workers frontier” closed, families became the center of households by 1920. The severe agricultural depression of the 1920s, reflected in VMI population loss, saw the reappearance of lodgers and boarders taken in by residents during those economic hard times. This pattern continued into the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Research Finding: Similar to relationship types, the variety of terms used to describe occupation increased dramatically from 1880 to 1940. Only 15 different categories were listed in 1880, while 324 were named in 1940 (many of these were variations on the same job, for example “ranch,” “ranch work,” “rancher,” “ranching”). Little analysis of employed is offered in this paper as a much deeper assessment of occupation and industry types needs to be conducted. A quick examination finds the following:

- Scattered occupations in 1880 (e.g., cook, farmer, general laborer).
- Farming and “housewife” the primary occupations through the Territorial Census years, with brick work showing up in 1889-1892.
- Little brick work by 1900 but the introduction of professions such as physicians, grocers, teachers, and engineers. Gold miners are also noted.
- Continued large presence of farming in 1900, some logging, and also work at sea; e.g., steam boat pilot.
- 1910 has continued farming and an increase in fishing, logging and carpentry. A large number of people are identified simply as “laborers,” and another considerable group as having their “own income.” Those identifying as “engineers” has increased.
- 1920 saw farming still very high, with increasing numbers in fishing and logging. There are also a large number of general laborers or helpers. Greenhouse workers, those associated with the poultry industry, electricians and telephone operators are all seen for the first time. The last gold miner is listed.
- 1930 introduces boat builders, more individuals in “sales” and those in office work such as stenographers. Farming, fishers and laborers are still high.
- 1940 shows a variety of engineers including civil, electrical and marine. A variety of terms were used to describe agriculture including: nursery, fruit, greenhouse, and poultry. Fishing and general labor are still prominent. “Retired” was noted by 67 people. The category “new worker” appears for the first time as does the term “road work.”

Historical Background:

These findings are not unexpected as the United States transformed from a primarily agricultural and low technology country into the industrial giant it became in the mid-Twentieth Century. Occupational complexity grew significantly as the rural agricultural economy of VMI slowly began to shift in the post-World War II era into what would essentially become a commuter economy. Agriculture, while continuing to dominate the Island economy through the 1930s, became specialized resulting in a more complex set of occupations to describe the various forms of agriculture practiced. The combination

of growing agricultural complexity, and increasing technological, commercial, and industrial occupations led to a larger number of occupational categories.

These data also reflect the economic changes that swept through the Puget Sound Region. The Seattle and Tacoma fires of the 1880s resulted in building codes that required brick construction. Easily accessible clay depositions on VMI led to an increase in brick-related employment. The occupational categories also reflect the rise and fall of logging. Tree cutting peaked in the 1910s and then slowly declined as VMI was denuded of significant stands of timber. Fishing maintained a firm base on VMI as fisherman begin to travel north to the Alaskan fishing grounds after the Puget Sound catches peaked in 1914 and then slowly declined.

The definition of engineer shifted from those operating steam engines in the 1880 to 1920 period to what would be considered the professionally trained engineers of today. The additional occupations that appear in the 1940 census of “new worker” and “road work” are a reflection of the New Deal work programs that brought employment to the Great Depression economy of VMI.

Research Finding: The four Territorial Censuses asked the question of how many males and how many females over age 21 were citizens. In 1885, only 4.3% of males and .6% of females met that qualification. By 1892, this had increased to 30.2% of males and 17.1% of females. Interestingly though, the percent of both males and females indicating they were citizens was greatest in 1889 (37.2% of men and 19.5% of women).

Historical Background:

The presence of non-citizens during the 1885 to 1892 period of these Territorial Censuses is not surprising. This was at the height of immigration to the United States, and VMI was no exception to this general pattern. Immigrants quickly applied for and were granted citizenship and so the increase in 1889 is not unexpected. The drop in citizenship in 1892 is a product of the economic boom in the Puget Sound Region, which preceded the economic collapse and Depression of 1893. Many new immigrants, who were not yet citizens, flooded into the region to take advantage of jobs, and other opportunities made easily accessible with the arrival of the transcontinental railroad in Tacoma in 1887.

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Dr. Alice Larson has a doctorate in Social Welfare Research from the University of Washington. For over 30 years, she has worked with non-profit and government agencies throughout the country in a social service/research capacity offering design and development, community assessment, and evaluation assistance on a range of topics. She is considered an expert in data development and analysis particularly around demographic information.

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